

PAPERS READ  
BEFORE THE  
LANCASTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

MAY 1, 1908.

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"History herself, as seen in her own workshop."

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NOTES ON AMOS AND ELIAS E. ELLMAKER  
AN OLD DIARY  
ROBERT BELL, PRINTER  
A REVOLUTIONARY LETTER  
MINUTES OF THE APRIL MEETING

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VOL. XII. NO. 5.

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LANCASTER, PA.  
REPRINTED FROM THE NEW ERA.  
1908.



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## NOTES ON AMOS AND ELIAS E. ELLMAKER

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The demolition of the long, low, frame building in the first square of North Duke street, known as the Ellmaker law office, removes a landmark on "Barbary Coast." Generations of lawyers occupied it, and, while the widow of the late N. Ellmaker lived, it remained a fixture on a valuable lot, centrally located, and which is now to be improved with a handsome modern office building. In the attic of this structure great masses of letters, briefs and other manuscripts have long been stored; and dust deep and thick had settled upon them for years. Some interesting and valuable papers have been found there, though the best of the historical material had been winnowed out before; but none of the correspondence of so distinguished a man as Amos Ellmaker, during nearly a-half century of active literary and professional life, could fail to have some public or private interest.

One of the treasures that has come to light was the notes he took of law lectures at Litchfield, Connecticut, where he studied early in the last century; and, as appears from a letter still extant, the taking of written notes as a student was rather irksome to him.

It will be remembered that he was born in 1787; graduated from Princeton College in the class of 1805, and after completing his law studies he established himself in the practice

of his profession in Harrisburg, Pa. He was an officer in the army which marched to the defense of Baltimore in 1812. Later he was appointed Prosecuting Attorney for Dauphin county, Pa., and was elected three times from the same county to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. In 1814 he was elected to Congress, but declined, having been appointed President Judge of the Dauphin-Lebanon-Schuylkill district. A little later he resigned his Judgeship to become Attorney-General of Pennsylvania, which he also resigned, and in 1821 settled down to the practice of law in Lancaster. In 1817 he declined the portfolio of the War Department in President Monroe's Cabinet. In 1832 he was the candidate of the Anti-Masonic party for Vice President of the United States, on the ticket with William Wirt. In 1834 he was defeated by James Buchanan in the election for United States Senator. Buchanan and George M. Dallas, in 1810, later President and Vice President of the United States, respectively, had been among Ellmaker's deputies when he was the Attorney General of Pennsylvania. He died in Lancaster, Pa., on November 28, 1851.

Mr. J. Watson Ellmaker, of this city, is a son of Esaias Ellmaker, who was a younger brother of Amos, and the uncle of the late Nathaniel Ellmaker. He came into the possession of much valuable correspondence of his distinguished forebears. Among them is this interesting letter, written by Amos Ellmaker, from College, to his father:



"To Mr. Nathaniel Ellmaker,  
"Lancaster County.  
"March 20, 1804.

"Dear father:

"I received your letter of the 9th Instant, in which was one enclosed for Dr. Smith, but of which you made no mention. I gave it to him. I am rejoiced to hear that you and the family are well. I am in good health. This season of the year renders the health the sedentary, precarious. I caught a violent cold some days ago, which confined me a while, tho' all was soon over. I will this day send for a small trunk to take my cloathes home in. I have to studies to write for next session. Each person must, when he enters the Junior or Senior class, purchase studies at the beginning of the year. I therefor got studies last fall which will serve untill next fall. The vacation after the next will be the time to prepare the studies. But nothing is lost by buying studies for the junior & senior years, as they always can be sold at least for the same price unless abused. I would not like to write my studies; It is true I write much now but never more than a few minutes at a time.

"From your ever Affect, Son  
"AMOS ELLMAKER."

"The 'studies' referred to in this letter were probably copies of certain sets of lectures, such as President Witherspoon's discourses on Moral Philosophy; there are several of these in the handwriting of Witherspoon's students, now in the alumni collection of the Princeton University Library. From this letter it appears that these lectures or 'studies' were copied during the vacations, from loaned copies, no doubt, or bought outright by those students whose state of health would not permit such violent exertion. In

them may possibly be found a remote ancestor of our modern half-tolerated and half-encouraged syllabus," says the "Princeton Alumni Weekly," of February 9, 1801, at which time Mr. Ellmaker had loaned the original letters to the University Library.

#### Another Noted Ellmaker.

It is not so well known hereabouts, however, that Amos Ellmaker had an elder brother, who had strong intellectual qualities, which by reason of his early death never so matured as to earn for him the distinction of his kinsman. Elias E. Ellmaker was graduated from Princeton in 1801, having previously graduated, in the class of 1799, from Dickinson College, Carlisle—then a Presbyterian institution, later and now under Methodist control. He was prepared for college by instruction at the Pequea Academy, under Rev. Dr. Robert Smith. Then the classical academy kept close to the Presbyterian Church, and the preacher was generally a teacher of the youth as well as an intellectual, social and even political leader of the adults. It was of this Parson Robert Smith that the writer, in his monograph on the "Scotch-Irish in Lancaster County," says:

"How simple, for example, these entries in the Bible of a Londonderry immigrant, converted by Whitfield at fifteen: 'Dec. 27, 1749, licensed to preach the gospel; May 22, 1750, married Betsey Blair; Oct. 9, 1750, accepted a call from Pequea and Leacock; March 25, 1751, ordained and installed; March 16, 1751, on Saturday, at 10 o'clock p. m., my son Samuel was born. I Samuel, 1:xx., "She bare a son and called his name Samuel, saying because I have asked him of the

Lord." Then in rapid succession—before the days of 'race suicide'—the Lord so heard him—within thirteen years, eight in all! And yet in that humble parsonage, up there almost in the wilderness, where Robert Smith served his God and ministered to his people continuously for forty-two years, 'a great part of the clergy of this State received the elements of their education or perfected their theological studies.' Under that lowly roof, associated for a time with the great divine who was the head of its household, was James Waddell, the 'Blind Preacher,' whom William Wirt immortalized, whom Patrick Henry declared to be the greatest orator of his time, and who became the progenitor of the giant Alexanders of Princeton. One of Smith's pupils, John McMillen, became the apostle of Presbyterianism in Western Pennsylvania, founded Jefferson College, and, from a log cabin in Washington county, sent more young men into the ministry than any other individual in the continent before the days of theological seminaries. From the loins of that same Robert Smith sprang a son, John Blair, who became president both of Hampden Sidney and Union Colleges, and that eldest son, Samuel Stanhope, whose birth he reverently chronicled as 'asked of God,' lived to become Professor of Moral Philosophy, reorganized Princeton College when the incidents of the Revolutionary War had dispersed its students and faculty, married Witherspoon's daughter and succeeded him in the Presidency of Princeton."

Strangely enough, William Wirt, the brilliant Virginia lawyer, whose speech on this "blind preacher," James Waddell, became an American classic, ran

on the same Presidential ticket with Amos Ellmaker, whose brother—possibly himself—was an academy boy on the log benches of the high school at Pequea Church.

This Elias E. Ellmaker, elder brother of Amos, and uncle of the late Nathaniel, is recalled to the writer, who recently "picked up" a volume entitled "The Revelation of Rights, by Elias E. Ellmaker, Esq., published at Columbus, Ohic, in 1841." It was apparently "printed for the publisher" ten years after the death of its author—and it would be interesting to know why, having prepared it for publication, it never was printed in his lifetime. He inscribed it "To the Human Family," instead of dedicating it, after the earlier fashion, to some patron of wealth or person of fame. He sought the "humble approbation of the honest and independent heart wherever it may be found;" and in his preface he recognizes that he "rows against the wind and stems the tide;" he fearlessly declared against "all tyranny or bondage," and planted his "eternal veto against all usurpation by man, and all tyranny, slavery, rapine and murder, in the name or under the titled authority of government." It was throughout a passionate appeal against African slavery and every other form of physical or intellectual bondage.

The author of this book began the practice of law at Waynesburg, Greene county, Pa.—then as yet one of the most backward county seats in the State—and died in Philadelphia at the age of thirty-one—about ten years after his graduation. After another decade, one J. S. Morris published his book.

In the annals of Princeton College

and University this Ellmaker is notable and important because one of his letters throws a flood of light on the student riots that played so important a part in the early history of the institution. The Princeton Weekly, heretofore quoted, says:

"The various histories of Princeton mention the Great Fire of 1802, when Nassau Hall was burned and an investigation failed to prove that the students started the fire, though they were, apparently, the only ones suspected; and of the Great Rebellion of 1807, when the undergraduates barred the doors and windows of Nassau Hall, repulsed the faculty's attack and withstood the siege for several days. It was a time of tactless discipline, that defeated its own ends and bred a spirit of discontent among the students probably unparalleled in the annals of the college. Besides, they had no athletics in those days, to teach self-control and to afford a safety-valve for superabundant physical energy. It was the same spirit of discontent, doubtless, that gave rise to the 'revolution' so graphically described below, and which, so far as The Weekly knows, is not mentioned in any of the histories, though, in the opinion of Elias Ellmaker, it 'exceeded any that has heretofore ever happened.'

"to Mr. Nathaniel Ellmaker

"Lancaster County

"Pennsylvania.

"P. Colledge February 28th 1800.

"Dear Father

"I this day received yours dated the 23....I have (as I conceive) made considerable progress in my studies this session. I have studied Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry & am now studying Surveying; & my leisure

hours, which are few, I employ in reading such books as are & will be applicable to my studies in Colledge. ....But I must also tell you now that we have had a revolution in colledge perhaps that exceeded any that has heretofore ever happened, the circumstances of which I shall mention in as summary manner as possible. The mornings being very cold this winter & the tutors praying very long in the morning, some of the students fell into a practice of scraping & disturbing them during their performance they past undetected for some considerable time. At last they took up three members of the Senior Class on suspicion they told them that they had proof of their guilt the students thinking that they had, immediately confessed thinking by that means to be cleared however it proved the contrary & they were immediately suspended from college. two of the Gentlemen being Virginians & the greater part of the students being from that settlement, thought the determination of the faculty to be too severe they according together with a number of others determined to resent it by disturbances Bullets, brick-bats &c, barrels of stones and other combustibles rung through the colledge for two or three days. Dr. Smith lectured us, all was silent for about two weeks one of the other Gentlemen who was suspended took it in his head to beat some of the tutors. he accordingly by a concerted plan, lay in wait in the entries (it being after night) whilst one of the students rolled a three pounder the tutor coming out to pick up the bullet, he immediately attacked him & beat him, then cleared himself unknown. This again stirred up the students & for about three days

the Colledge re-echoed with stones. Dr. Smith lectured us, called us together about ten o'clock at night, but all in vain, he then determined to shut up colledge, till a board of trustees met. But fortunately all disturbance ceased & the Colledge returned to its former regularity &c

"No more at present

"from your affectionate &c

"ELIAS ELLMAKER

"To Nathaniel Ellmaker.

"P. S. You mentioned that Margaret was preparing some stockings for me. I also wish that she would make me some shirts which might be sent on by Hand's Sons. I shall not want any money this session unless something unforeseen should happen."

The "Weekly" continues: "Who the unfortunate tutor was for whom the Virginian 'lay in weight' is not certainly known, but as Henry Hollock 1794 and Frederick Beasley 1797 were the tutors for the year 1800, it was probably one of these. Tutor Beasley was afterward Provost of the University of Pennsylvania."

The "Margaret" referred to in the "postscript" was, of course, Margaret Ellmaker, afterwards married to George Kinzer, of Earl township. The "Hand's Sons" referred to were sons of Gen. Edw. Hand, who lived and died at "Rockford," on the Conestoga, near "Indian Hill" and "Williamson Park," between Witmer's Bridge and Reigart's Landing. He was Washington's Adjutant and a member of the Continental Congress, 1784-5. He sent his boys to Princeton. One can see his grave and tombstone at the southeast corner of St. James' Episcopal Church, by glancing over the Orange street church-yard wall. The blood spots of the Hand suicide will never fade from the parlor floor at "Rockford."

# AN OLD DIARY

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## (INTRODUCTORY.)

The brief paper which is to follow this introduction consists of a series of extracts selected from a diary kept by Matthias Zahm, beginning in 1835, and ending in 1849. Although Mr. Zahm died thirty-two years ago, there are, no doubt, a number of persons present who remember him well, for there was no more familiar face than his seen on the streets of Lancaster during the fifty years preceding his death on August 12, 1874. A few preliminary words, however, as to his personality will not be out of order.

Matthias Zahm came of sturdy German ancestry. He was born in 1789, and lived to the patriarchal age of eighty-five years. He was one of a family of five brothers, all of whom lived here, I believe. Race suicide not yet having become a fad, he became the father of four sons and four daughters, many of whose descendants are still living in this community.

Although everybody knew "Grandpap" Zahm fifty years ago, if you go out into the city and make inquiries as to his history about the only thing you will learn is that he was court-crier for an unremembered number of years. As the writer knew him only by sight, he is unable to add any personal recollections. But during the twenty-five years that he saw him almost daily, and often listened to him, he attained some knowledge of the man.



Mr. Zahm was small of stature, upright and walked along the street slowly and deliberately. Everybody seemed to know him, and as he was fond of gossip and story-telling he made many pauses as he passed along. Every one bid him the day, if nothing more. He was a man of shrewd common sense, with strong likes and dislikes, and he was as liberal in expressing himself of his opinions of persons and things as any man in the city. He could be sharply sarcastic and was never given to thinking one thing and saying another.

He was a close observer, both of men and things, and for many years was accustomed to note in what may be termed a note-book or diary his observations on persons and the things that were going on in the busy world around him. Some of the most piquant of his notes can not be reproduced here because they might offend the relatives of those concerning whom they were made.

But, for all that, he was a most genial man and a hearty friend. He was liberal of his means and of his advice, and the former was often more acceptable than the latter, but, as he was good natured at heart, everybody was his friend.

For more than forty years he was the crier in the Lancaster Courts. Prior to becoming such he had been a tipstaff, and, in consequence, he had been an officer of the Court for a full half century. He was rarely sick, and never absent from his post of duty during his entire official life, save during the last two terms of Court prior to his death, when his health began to fail.

He was stricken with paralysis on

Monday, August 10, and died the following Wednesday, August 12, 1874. He resided at No. 227 East Orange street, and was buried from that place on Saturday, August 15, in the Lancaster Cemetery. He would have completed his eighty-fifth year had he lived until the following Monday.

F. R. D.

### 1836.

January 14—About 6 a. m. Charles Nauman's livery stable was set on fire and it was destroyed. The house in which Charles Nauman and Arthur Armstrong lived was destroyed also. The property belonged to Mr. Armstrong. This was the third fire within three weeks—none accidental.

January 23—6:30 a. m.—The citizens were again called to action by the cry of fire. The stable of Mrs. Hall, property of James Evans, was set on fire. The fourth fire since December 28th.

February 7—Judge Franklin died this morning about 2 o'clock.

February 26—The silent watch began duty to-night.

April 22—About 11:20 p. m. we had the most splendid northern lights imaginable. It burst forth from the north like a cloud of fire and smoke, and formed a beautiful large star of red, white and blue streaks. At first nearly always in vibration until it reached the middle of the horizon, where the center of the star became red. It extended to the east and west, then passed toward the south and disappeared. Lasted about 22 minutes.

May 7—John Wise made a grand balloon ascension with his new balloon. The balloon was burned in Harford county.

May 12—A large meteor was seen between 8 and 9 o'clock. It passed from south to north, then northwest, with a rumbling noise like thunder.

May 14—Frost, killing the plants.

May 31 and June 5—Fire in stoves.

August 31—Frost in exposed places.

October 7.—This afternoon about 4 o'clock Gen. Harrison was escorted into Lancaster, on which occasion the malignant opposition showed their wisdom by directing the boys to hoist several petticoats, and carrying Van Buren flags and making some boys drunk at night.

October 8—Gen. Harrison left Lancaster without opposition.

October 12—Severe snow storm. The trees so heavy with snow many were split and many branches broke.

November 21—Began to dig at the Court House pavements, east and west, to lay water pipes.

#### 1837.

February 20—Last night the pumps at the City water works were started for the first time, pipes pumped full to reservoir.

February 22—To-day the water was let into the basin and down East King street as far as the Court House, where a section of hose was attached to the plug at Ross' corner, when a splash of water and drunken squabble ended the solemnity of the day.

April 23—Snow about five inches deep; trees bending with weight of snow.

May 22—Small notes issued by the city—shinplaster currency.

May 27—Metallic currency panic is staring us in the face. \$60,000,000 owing to England, and all Jackson's experiment a bubble. Benton's mint-drops the only relief, and none in the market.

June 15—Began to dig on East Orange and Shippen streets to lay water pipes.

July 3—Water was turned into the pipes on East Orange, Shippen and Lime streets.

September 13—Frost in low places.

1838.

March 29—Railroad bridge near Downingtown burned.

May 3—Firemen's parade. The American Company had a boat about 18 feet long on four wheels, drawn by four gray horses, representing the landing of Columbus. The people in the boat, representing Indians, were, John L. Benedict, banner-bearer; Daniel Roth, John Booring, Conrad Anna, Adam Dellet, Mathias Zahm, and G. M. Zahm as Queen, with D. Roth's little girl as an Indian child; S. Stambach, interpreter.

May 30—About 7 p. m. fire was discovered. In about two hours the following stables were in ashes: Two belonging to Mr. W. Cooper, one on each side of the alley in the rear of West King street, one owned by Dr. F. A. Muhlenberg, one by Dr. Fahnestock. One of George Ford's and one belonging to Mrs. Hoff, in which the fire started. Supposed to have been set on fire.

May 31—About noon the walls of the city basin began to give way; by evening the northeast and south walls were down in the basin; also, part of the division wall.

June 4—Voting for school laws; polled 574 votes; only one against the schools.

July 25—Butter sold in our markets this morning at 25 cents. Outrageous!

August 1—Water turned into the repaired basin.

August 8—Potatoes sold at \$1.50 per bushel on market to-day.

September 27—The embankment outside the basin slipping away.

December 8—To-day some soldiers from Philadelphia passed through Lancaster for Harrisburg to protect the State Capitol against anarchy and misrule, carried on at the seat of government by a set of outlaws from different parts of the State. To-night several hundred more arrived here, to continue their journey to-morrow. A meeting was called to-night at the Court House to keep up the excitement. Speeches were made by G. W. Barton, R. Frazer and others.

December 9.—The soldiers from Philadelphia left here for Harrisburg—about eight hundred.

#### 1840.

Great excitement between the political parties, and both parties confident of success. Hickory poles have been put up in every section of the city and county, in lanes and alleys. The Harrison poles are known by a log cabin and key on top. Newspaper slander is the order of the day. Each party publishes outrageous lies about the other candidate. They keep at loggerheads continually, publishing trash and nonsense disgraceful to the morals of a civilized society. Meetings were held four months before the election, and marching with drum and fife by both parties every night except Sunday.

#### 1842.

February 16—Severe snowstorm, four to five inches deep. Many drifts, very deep; no trains from Harrisburg for three days.

June 9—The fish and ball taken from the Lutheran steeple.

June 23—The fish and ball put up again.

July 4—Flag presented to Finley's Company.

October 5—Got a ton of coal from Robert Johnston. The only ton I could get in Lancaster at the time. Paid \$5.87.

1843.

March 17—Severe snowstorm 18 inches deep on level.

March 19—Fire destroyed the session house of the Episcopalian congregation.

May—This is the greatest time for humbugs that was ever known. An old Yankee from New York State has been preaching since last summer that the world is to end April 1, 1843. The world is to be burned, but his crazy followers are to be taken up on a large plate of glass until the fire was out, and then come down again and dwell with the elect, but when it drew nigh to the 1st of April the 3d was fixed and then the 23d. Before the 23d the shrewd Yankee came out in public print denying that he had fixed any particular date, but set the time between April, 1843, and April, 1844, so as to gull the people a little longer, and, strange as it may seem, nevertheless true, hundreds committed suicide, and as many became deranged, and many families were put in a deplorable way by this Yankee hoax. Others were going about preaching temperance, trumpeting forth their own degradation, singing ridiculous songs, selling their song books and pamphlets, relating stories about the greatest blackguards in the country, all for the good of the community and to sell their books and pamphlets at enormous prices, besides a slip collection now and then in a crowded house, which money they would smilingly pocket and sneak off without

paying for services. Weinbrenner promulgated a doctrine that unless the women (he cared very little about the men) were doused head over heels in the water by him, or his cronies, they were gone geese. So it happened that Millerism, Weinbrennerism and Yankee Temperance (humbugs) were all sprung on the people at one time, set some of the people reeling and made them crazier than ever rum did, and all for the good of the people.

Now the 23d of April is past, and nothing unusual took place. But on the 27th we had a severe thunder-storm between 1 and 2 o'clock in the afternoon; the wind blew, rained and hailed—nothing unusual for this time of the year. The storm lasted only ten minutes; the sun resumed its former brightness, and shone on the just and unjust.

June 2—All vegetables frozen. Water standing out had thin ice.

June 11—Thirty degrees colder than the tenth.

July 3—Twenty degrees colder than the 2d.

#### 1844.

Fruit very plentiful. Cider sold for 50 cents, 75 cents and \$1 a barrel. Picked apples sold for 10 cents to 12½ cents per bushel.

May 6—A riot at Kensington, Philadelphia county; very serious. The native Americans and Irish shot each other. Burned churches and houses. The Sheriff's men refused to obey orders. Many children were trampled to death. Word was sent to Harrisburg to Gov. Porter, requesting troops.

May 9—The Governor passed through Lancaster on his way to Philadelphia. The Governor ordered 100 volunteers to follow him.

May 11—The volunteers returned.

1845.

May 31—Sold Farmers' Bank stock at \$49 and ten shares at \$49.12½.

July 11—Served notice to the subscribers to the cotton factory to be built in Lancaster; capital, \$100,000.

1846.

January 19—City lamps on East Orange street; one at A. Armstrong's, Dr. John L. Atlee's, Mr. Penrose's, at Mr. Hurford's and one at Mr. M. Zahm's, to light East Orange street, between North Queen and Shippen streets, the expenses to be paid by contributions.

March 15—Floods in Susquehanna River; part of the Harrisburg bridge washed away; the river higher than it has been for fifty or sixty years.

April 11—Mr. Gemperling's barn and stable were set on fire; the alley south of East King street; seven barns and stables east and west were burned. A stranger who was standing in the crowd was pushed down and robbed of \$1,000. Patrolling commenced to-night in Lancaster.

November 23—Sold 107 shares of Lancaster Bank stock \$33.25; \$35.75.

November 29—To-day the Moravians had jubilee, it being one hundred years since their congregation was first started in Lancaster.

November 30.—Supreme Court held in Lancaster.

1847.

April 21—This evening we had illuminations in Lancaster to celebrate the great victories of the Americans at Buena Vista, Vera Cruz, by Gen. Taylor and Gen. Scott.

June 15—Sold Farmers' Bank stock at \$50.06½; \$50.12; \$50.25. The first stock that has sold above par for several years.



July 19—This afternoon a portion of the arch on Water street caved in. A section caved in some time ago during a heavy rain.

October 20—Attempt to set fire to the cotton factory.

1848.

March 21—Sold bank stock. Farmers sold at \$49.12½ to \$49.87½, and Lancaster, \$38.

June 13.—Town meeting to appoint committee to collect money for the Allentown sufferers, who lost all by fire, which destroyed one-fourth of the city.

July—"Loco-foco" meeting at the Court House. Addresses by Sam. Houston and Kauffman, both from Texas.

August 29.—The Conestoga so low the city pumps can't work. The reservoir empty and the factory can't be supplied, but are pumping from the run. Work only every second or third day. The Water Committee refuse water for building.

September 6—Water supply shut off.

September 18—Water turned on again.

November 5—This morning before six o'clock the stack at the new cotton factory on the west side of South Prince street fell to the ground. It was about 100 feet high, supposed to contain 1,000 bricks for every foot.

November 7—Election for President. The number of votes was 2,000. This was the first Presidential election held on the same day throughout the United States.

November 22—City meeting at the Court House in reference to lighting the city with gas.

December 23—The tavern at the northwest corner of North Queen and

Orange streets sold at public sale, and bought by Jacob Danner for \$11,160. It was the property of Phil. Reitzel and Michael McGrann. I made this entry in case it is sold again during my life to see how much less it will bring.

1849.

August 10—President Taylor arrived in Lancaster this evening. He was escorted to Kendig's Hotel, Centre Square. The Court House was illuminated with 336 sperm candles. The President was accompanied by Governor Johnson and members of his Cabinet.

August 11—President Taylor was in town until noon. He received the ladies from 8 to 9 o'clock and the gentlemen from 9 to 10 o'clock.

## ROBERT BELL, PRINTER

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Not quite two years since, in the spring of 1906, the writer came across an item relating to Robert Bell, a Quaker city printer of the later Colonial period, whose brilliancy of career was unearthed in detail mainly through a business deal we noted he was to have had with Lancaster's prominent townsman, Edward Snippen; and there is so much of general as well as some local interest attached to Bell's life that it is now and here presented to our Historical Society as a valuable addition to eastern Pennsylvania history.

Some one whose identity has not been revealed states, in the Master Printer, that "Robert Bell's very name is forgotten, and only recalled when one of his publications is found in the auction room or on the second-hand stalls. To the world at large Franklin's name stands alone in representing the Philadelphia printer, while that of Bell is as dead as the world's indifference can make it." We shall endeavor to bring his work back to life.

Bell practically began his publishing career where the famous Franklin left off, and from then on really issued and sold a larger variety if not more books than his philosophic predecessor. The period of his activity ranges from 1768 to 1784. Bell was in Philadelphia prior to the former date, probably as early as 1765. He was a reputed Scotchman, and supposed by one authority to have been a partner of George Alexander Stevens, coming

to Philadelphia in 1766. The correct time of Bell's entrance to that city is unknown, and has been given from 1765 to 1768, the latter date obtaining some preference.

**Edward Shippen's Early Letter.**

To aid in establishing Bell's advent in America we find Edward Shippen, writing from Lancaster, at Christmas, 1765, desires his correspondent in Philadelphia to seek for "a small octavo entitled 'Instruction for the Education of Daughters,'" and requested that "Mr. Yeates inquire among the gentlemen of St. Andrew's Club for it, either in French or English; if he fails in these searches, I must beg the favor of Mr. Luman or Mr. Bell to send to Scotland for it."

If the foregoing letter alludes to Robert Bell, or another of that surname, one John Bell, "is not a serious matter," says a writer; yet when the former's "importance as a printer and patriot is considered, any facts or data regarding his career are desirable to be known."

Even lately, after most of this paper was written, the Public Ledger answering a correspondent, states that "Bell is said to have been the first to establish a circulating library here (Philadelphia), if not in this country;" and that two library companies were organized in 1765, "both in existence before Bell came to this country. Bell never was a librarian." Be this as it may, we have from another source, prepared a few years ago, that "Bell must have been a very busy man, as he set up a subscription library in addition to his other occupations, waifs from which, bearing the label of its founder, are occasionally found. The wording of this label reveals his originality. Indeed, his origi-

nal vein of wit and genius, as well as his patriotic ardor in behalf of his adopted country, are freely shown in nearly everything he touched, and particularly in his advertisements and prospectuses." His re-publication in 1774 of Blackstone's "Commentaries," of which there are five volume editions, was a stupendous project for a struggling colonial printer, and it is gratifying to discover a big list of subscribers to at least 1,500 copies (some of which reached Lancaster), testifying to its appreciation.

#### **Bell Introduces Cheap Editions.**

Quoting a portion of Hildeburn's preface to "Issues of the Press of Pennsylvania," it states that "Robert Bell, with perhaps the exception of Andrew Stewart—who reprinted a number of popular English works—was the first to present in home-made garb a judicious selection from every class of literature current in England .....His success in offering cheap editions soon compelled his fellow-printers to enter the same field." This shows that he was far in advance of his time; and this trait he followed in all his advertising methods of book printing, publishing and selling.

Taking as a starting point the year 1768, one of the earliest of Bell's curious advertisements appeared in Franklin's Pennsylvania Gazette, of April 14, thus:

"Any person possessed of libraries or parcels books may have ready Money, according to their Value, by applying to Robert Bell, Bookseller and Auctioneer, at Mr. James Emerson's, the Sugar Loaf, between the River and Front street, in Market street; Or, if the Possessors choose to take the Chance of a public Sale, they may have them exhibited, with a

regular Catalogue, by Auction, at the Uppermost Vendue-House, in Second street, near Vine street, where the intrinsic merit and excellence of each book shall be rationally expiated upon, with Truth and Propriety; also the extrinsic or original Value Properly demonstrated for the satisfaction of Sellers and Buyers."

During 1768 Bell began his buoyant business as a publisher in earnest. In July of that year he uses the Pennsylvania Chronicle to advertise his first publication, "which introduced to the people of this continent the first American edition of two works of those duo immortals and staunch friends, Doctor Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith: 'The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, etc.,' and 'The Traveller, or a Prospect of Society, etc.'"

#### **Starts a Printing Place.**

Late in 1769, or early in 1770, Bell established a press in the building occupied shortly before by the Union Library, next door to St. Paul's Church, in Third street. He also soon became noted as an auctioneer of books, and on one occasion, February 7, 1774, he put himself on record as a "Professor of Book Auctioneering." His numerous catalogues would astonish our latter-day Lancaster antiquarians, Messrs. Auxer, Steigerwalt and others. In 1770 he issued a catalogue of second-hand Greek and Latin Classics, and on October 25 of that year another catalogue was printed; followed by others in 1773 (announcing fifteen hundred new and old volumes).

In support of a petition to the Assembly to authorize book auctions in Philadelphia, he printed this memorandum, January 17, 1774: "The more

Books are sold, the more will be sold, is an established Truth, well known to every liberal Reader, and to every Bookseller of experience." Bell always made a sale for his books when the demand for them fell short; and he not alone petitioned the General Assembly to aid him in his book auctions, but he journeyed to other States "to make things go."

#### Catalogues Galore.

His other known catalogues of books bear the dates of 1774, 1777, 1778 (three lists, one being a "Collection of Sentimental Food," and another consisting of 2,000 volumes in Bell's Circulating Library); 1780, 1782, 1783 (2,421 works and 21 maps for sale), and 1784 (the last being several hundred new and old medical works).

Hildeburn gives a joint Lancaster and Philadelphia publication and printing thus: "The Chronicle of the Kings of England from the Reign of William the Conqueror (first King of England) down to his present Majesty, George the Third. By Nathan Ben-Saddi. Lancaster: Stewart Herbert, jun., 1775. Philadelphia: Robert Bell and Benjamin Towne, 1775." Who of our local historians knows anything of this Lancaster publisher?

#### Prints Many Patriotic Pamphlets.

Robert Bell printed many pamphlets and books prior to and during the Revolution, in which his patriotic sentiments are glowingly set forth. No printer in America could have done more; he was indefatigable. He was especially busy in 1776, when he printed a series of letters to the Legislature on "American Independence." A second edition of "Plain Truth" was partly printed on coarse blue paper,

which, as Bell stated, "constituted the law of necessity," and he added, further, "The Patriot surmounteth every difficulty," etc.

"Common Sense," by Thomas Paine, printed in several editions by Bell, became known the world over, and consumed much paper. One of these editions was also printed by Francis Bailey, in King's Street, Lancaster, during the same year. Bell himself placed "Large Additions to Common Sense," thus keeping his printing establishment fully occupied.

The first American editions of Thomson's "Seasons" and of Milton's "Paradise Lost" were both issued by our subject in 1777. A large number of classics were introduced from Europe by Bell, printed at his own press, including "Aesop's Fables," "Robinson Crusoe," the "Letters of Lord Chesterfield," Voltaire's "Romances," Sheridan's "School for Scandal," and others.

#### **His Numerous Publications.**

We have personally copied fully 150 distinct titles of books and pamphlets printed by Bell, and they embrace every subject imaginable. from religion to liberalism, medicine to mystery, science to sentiment, politics to pleasure; and, were it no digression on this occasion, many of these titles would be edifying to present-day book-lovers. His penchant for publicity is shown in a pert pamphlet printed by him in 1778 on "The humble confession, declaration, recantation and apology of Benjamin Towne, Printer, in Philadelphia."

Among the "upper ten" in Lancaster, after the Revolution, representing what might be termed the "four hundred," there were some fastidious book-buyers, and these no doubt ob-



tained their quota of Bell's imprints, as Philadelphia was a point of constant change and barter for the well-to-do. Bell kept in touch with these desirable people in all the nearby towns of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

#### **Contemporary Philadelphia and Lancaster Printers.**

During Bell's time, or a decade before, to about 1785, there were a host of other printers in Philadelphia, some of whom achieved more general fame than he did. The list includes: B. Franklin, David Hall, B. Towne, James Chattin, Anthony Arbruster, Christopher Sauer (spelled three ways), Henry Miller, John Dunlap, Styner & Cist, Jos. Crukshank, Rob't. Aitkin, Francis Bailey, James Humphreys, Jr., David C. Claypole and Thos. Bradford.

In the town of Lancaster, with a population of about 2,000 at the same time, we find almost as many printers who were particularly interested in producing German books, pamphlets and newspapers: James Chalten, 1751; Henry Miller, 1752; S. Holland, 1753; Francis Bailey, 1774-84; Matthias Bartgis, 1776-77; Theophilus Cossart, 1778-82; Jacob Bailey, 1784; and others a few years later. F. R. Diffenderffer, Litt. D., particularizes on these industrious individuals in his prolific paper published in our society's pamphlet, January 1, 1904.

#### **Bell's Demise in the South.**

Robert Bell's last days saw him leave Pennsylvania almost with as little ceremony and record of the circumstances as when he first arrived in Philadelphia from Scotland. One chronicler tells us that "he continued to the end his auctions, his printing

and bookselling. In 1784 he visited Richmond upon business and died there September 23." The Ledger, under recent date, says "Bell went South on a business trip, not to peddle his books, as one writer notes, but to sell his books to booksellers in other towns. In some of the larger towns, such as in the city of Charleston, Bell at times would auction off parts of his stock, but he was in no sense a peddler. While on this trip he fell ill at Richmond, Va., and died there on September 16, 1784."

One or the other of these dates of Bell's demise is surely wrong, like some other bits of unverified information regarding his vending of books, etc. We should also state that, out of the correspondence carried on by the writer at intervals for over twenty months, it has been impossible to locate the final resting-place of one of the most persevering and patriotic book printers ever having dwelt in the shade of "Fenn's woods." All honor to his pristine public service!

## A REVOLUTIONARY LETTER

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The following is a copy of a letter written in 1781 by William Augustus Atlee, at that time commissary of British prisoners held in Lancaster, to Joseph Reed, president of the Provincial Council, acquainting him with conditions in Lancaster in reference to the prisoners. The original letter was purchased in Philadelphia by the president of the Society, Mr. George Steinman:

Lancaster, ye 13th of June, 1781.

D. Sir:

Colonel Wood just now honored me with the perusal of your letter to him of the 9th instant, wherein I observe the Council have had information that the Prisoners of the Convention Troops lately arrived from Virginia, may be accommodated within the Picquets at this place, & direct their continuing here.

I beg leave to represent to Council that before the arrival of the convention Troops, there were near eight hundred Prisoners of War at this Port stationed at the Barracks within the Picquets, under my direction, and among them a great number sick of a putrid fever, which gave great uneasiness to the inhabitants, as there was the greatest probability of its being communicated to the Town.

Upon the arrival of the British of the convention Prisoners it was expected that the Guard who came with them, would have proceeded on with them to the Eastward, but as they were hastily assembled at York Town

& were determined to return, I advised Major Bailey (who had charge of them before Col. Wood's arrival) to secure them under the Guard then on duty here. We accordingly turned a number of them into the Barracks, but as they would not contain the whole (there being near five hundred women and children among them) the married people were permitted to encamp on the common outside of the Stockade, where they still remain (except a few who have taken shelter in an old continental Stable) but badly sheltered from the weather.

As we expected their stay would be short, we apprehended no inconvenience from their being crowded in the Barracks for a few days; but I can assure Council that, notwithstanding all the care and attention of several of the Physicians and Surgeons of the convention Army, who continued here till within these few days, and were so kind as to advise with and assist Doctor Houston, who attends the Prisoners here under my direction, this fatal disorder has gained ground & there are now at least one hundred and fifty sick in these greatly crowded Barracks, without a prospect of its abating. The Rooms which we had before set apart for Hospital Rooms cannot contain them. They are scattered throughout the Barracks, & I know not a house in or near the Town which could be had for a hospital.

I cannot think the Gentleman who gave the information to Council could have had an idea that there were near two thousand Men, Women & Children among the Prisoners of War and Convention at this place, when he gave his opinion to Council that they might be accommodated in the Barracks here, nor could he have known of their unhealthy situation.

I should think half that number of healthy persons would fill them sufficiently at any time; but in their present sickly state I could wish even that number reduced.

My duty as Commissary of Prisoners obliges me to trouble Council on this occasion. It is necessary, as well for the safety of the Inhabitants as the security of the Prisoners, that they should be kept compact and as free from disorders as possible. The Barracks here can not contain the whole of the convention Troops with their Family; and the Prisoners of War before stationed here. The Gaol is filled with Sailors & others, and it is very difficult to prevent those from stragling who are encamped outside the Stockades.

Permit me also to mention, Sir, that in anticipation of the Convention Troops being removed from hence, I yesterday received from Reading from Col. Wood's party between fifty and sixty Prisoners of War (not of the convention Troops, Tho. bro't with him from Virginia) in exchange for which I was to have given him about the like number of convention Troops who had stragled from their quarters in Virginia and been confined here before his arrival. And I have this minute Letters by an officer mentioning the approach of another Party from Fishkile, lately taken, & who at the particular request of his Excellency, Genl. Washington, are ordered to be kept closely confined, & I hardly know where to place them, tho' the Gaol must be their Station.

I am, Sir,

With the highest respect.

Your most obed't Serv't,

WILL A. ATLEE.

His Excellency Joseph Reed, Esquire.

## Minutes of the May Meeting

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Lancaster, Pa., May 1, 1908.

The regular monthly meeting of the Lancaster County Historical Society was held this (Friday) evening in the Society's headquarters, in the Smith Library Building, on North Duke street. Several very interesting papers were read, and the session was a most profitable one for those present. President Steinman presided.

Henry N. Howell, of this city, and Ira R. Kraybill, of Mount Joy, who were proposed for membership at the last meeting, were duly elected. The names of Charles A. Burrows, of Lititz, and Miss Susan McIlvaine, of this city, were proposed for membership, and, under the rules, will be acted upon at the next meeting.

Librarian Sener announced the following donations to the Society's collection during the past month:

Pamphlet address on D. W. Abercrombie, LL.D.; Public Roads and Road Making, by Hon. W. U. Hensel; Account Book of the National House, Lancaster, from 1845 to 1849, from W. T. Brown, Esq.; Annals of Iowa, for April, 1908; German-American Annals for March and April, 1908; Pennsylvania German Magazine for April, 1908; several exchanges; Lancaster Street Lottery, from Mr. F. H. Calder.

Under the head of new business, Mr. George F. K. Erisman brought up the question of the summer outing of the society, and on his motion the matter was referred to the Executive Committee, with the recommendation that Manheim be selected as the place to hold the gathering.

On motion of F. R. Diffenderffer, a committee was appointed to draft a tribute of respect upon the death of Samuel Evans, Esq., one of the most valued members of the society, and since its organization one of its Vice Presidents. President Steinman named the following as the committee: F. R. Diffenderffer, S. M. Sener and A. K. Hostetter.

The question of filling the vacancy in the Vice Presidency caused by the death of Mr. Samuel Evans was raised by Miss Clark, and on her motion there was a unanimous recommendation that Mr. F. R. Diffenderffer be chosen to succeed Mr. Evans.

The first paper of the evening was prepared by Miss Mary Goodell and read by Librarian S. M. Sener. It embraced notes from the diary kept by Matthias Zahm, who was a familiar figure on the streets of Lancaster a half-century ago. "Grandpap" Zahm, as he was known by almost every one, was crier of the Lancaster Courts for forty years. He was a close observer of men and things, and his diary, in consequence, is full of very entertaining notes of occurrences and persons in Lancaster county during a portion of his lifetime. The diary embraces the years from 1835 to 1849. Several notes of timely interest are herewith produced. Under date of June 2, 1843, he says: "All vegetables frozen; water standing out had thin ice;" June 11, "thirty degrees colder than the 10th." On July 25, 1838, he chronicled this interesting fact: "Butter sold on our market this morning at 25 cents. Outrageous!" The following note, under date of December 23, 1849, may be of interest to real estate men, as showing the value of property in the centre of the city at that period: "The tavern, northwest

corner of North Queen and Orange streets, sold at public sale. Bought by Jacob Danner for \$11,160. It was the property of Philip Reitzel and Michael McGrann. I made this entry in case it is sold again during my lifetime to see how much less it would bring." Our early chronicler never dreamed that some day this property, which he feared would depreciate in value, would sell for \$60,000, that being the price paid by the Y. M. C. A. for the Shober property.

The next paper read was prepared by Hon. W. U. Hensel, who used as his subject the old Ellmaker law office, which was recently demolished, to provide room for a modern office building. A search through the attic of the ancient structure revealed many interesting and valuable papers, on which Mr. Hensel's article was based. In the absence of the author, the paper was read by Mrs. A. K. Hostetter.

Another very entertaining paper was read by Mr. D. B. Landis, its author, who took for his subject "Robert Bell," a Colonial printer, of Philadelphia, many of whose books were sold here. It was stated that he was the first person to establish a circulating library in Philadelphia. In his business dealings he came in contact with a number of Lancastrians, among them Edward Shippen.

A Revolutionary letter, written in 1781, by William Augustus Atlee, that time commissary in charge of the British troops held prisoners at Lancaster, to Joseph Reed, Secretary of the Provincial Council, was read. It stated there were over 2,000 prisoners confined at Lancaster at that time. The letter, which is of great value, was recently purchased in Philadelphia by President Steinman.



The thanks of the society were extended to the writers of the several papers, which were ordered to be published in the Society's proceedings.

The meeting then adjourned.





